

Dear Honorable Judge Hilton,

My name is Maya Little and I have gotten to know Chelsea Manning personally over the last year. I am writing to you today because I am a friend and also an admirer of her courage, resilience, and willingness to be punished for her beliefs. Chelsea describes herself as a political prisoner or former political prisoner because she was literally imprisoned for 7 years, partly in solitary confinement for her political beliefs. Even though the court may not agree with her beliefs, I have admired that she will stick by her beliefs through I believe anything and any punishment inflicted on her. I am writing to you today because I believe that regardless of the court's understanding of Chelsea, I know she will never break from her principles. I know that she cannot be compelled, even by jail time, to participate in something she considers against the very principles upon which she has based her life since at least 2010. The court may consider this strange or not agree with Chelsea's principles but I ask the court to consider that there is no purpose in keeping Chelsea jailed, knowing that she will never break these principles and testify.

I first met Chelsea in March, 2018. She spoke at a rally against white supremacy and against American imperialism. She spoke of the time she spent in jail between 2010 and 2017 and how being placed in solitary confinement resulted in extreme trauma and mental anguish. Chelsea had 7 years of her life taken away and even though she had just been out for year she made it clear she was fully committed to struggling against what she believes are attempts by courts to silence her and silence criticism of the United States military. Every day she is in jail myself and other friends and fellow activists are utterly lost for a community leader and warm, compassionate friend. We admire her bravery, we know she will never give in, but we know she is undergoing extremely torturous conditions and punishment for her unwillingness to testify and that she will continue to. When Chelsea was in solitary confinement last month she threw up from over-stimulation the first time she visited face to face with some friends. By continuing to keep her imprisoned the court is only inflicting further mental trauma on Chelsea which will lead to nothing.

By keeping Chelsea jailed the court is also depriving Chelsea's friends, fellow activists, community, and the many queer and trans people who look up to her of a mentor and community activist. Chelsea is one of the most brilliant and persistent free speech and LGBTQ rights activists I know. I have personally watched how her pride in her identity and service to others through speaking events has led to greater self-confidence and courage among LGBTQ youth who have been impacted by her message. By keeping Chelsea jailed, the LGBTQ community is being deprived of a leader in advocating for our rights and our safety. The court may not agree with Chelsea's stances but she is an advocate for free speech and government transparency. Even if it's not within your honor's discretion to praise Chelsea for her actions, I believe an American court of law should be able to appreciate these principles and know that we need all kinds of activists to advocate for them. Please release Chelsea from imprisonment. I believe keeping her imprisoned will serve no purpose other than to draw out traumatic experiences for Chelsea and it will not further the court's interests in any way.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,  
Maya Little

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maya Little". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Maya" is written with a large, stylized 'M' and a small 'y'. The last name "Little" is written with a large 'L' and a small 'l', followed by a horizontal flourish.